

TESTIMONY
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Monday, March 28, 2022

SB 477, An Act Concerning the Public Health of Residents of the State

**HB 5397, An Act Declaring Gun Violence a Public Health Crisis and
Establishing the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and Advisory
Council on Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention**

Yale New Haven Hospital provides access to high-quality, patient-centered care in collaboration with others who share our values. We offer our patients a range of healthcare services, from primary care to the most complex care available anywhere in the world. We appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony on ***SB 477, An Act Concerning the Public Health of Residents of the State***, and ***HB 5397, An Act Declaring Gun Violence a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and Advisory Council on Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention***.

We thank the General Assembly for its leadership in passing HB5677 in 2021, as the first State in the nation to set out the parameters to provide Medicaid reimbursement for violence intervention services rendered by violence prevention professionals. Through this legislation, we have the opportunity to advance care for victims of violence in Connecticut, and prevent further injuries and needless loss of life.

In the past few years we joined with other healthcare leaders across the nation and formalized our hospital-based violence intervention program, providing a crisis response team for victims in our Emergency Departments, and a follow-up, wraparound case management program for victims of violence. We have been in partnership with the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention, and in 2020, joined as a founding member of the Connecticut Hospital-based Violence Intervention Program collaborative, convened by the Connecticut Hospital Association.

Through this collaborative we have continued to work with the Department of Public Health and Department of Social Services to ensure that our State will be able to bring services to victims of violence in an equitable and sustainable manner.

In terms of our own Violence Intervention Program efforts, we have been incredibly fortunate. Through the support of our hospital leadership, we have been able to hire a Victims Services Coordinator, and a Lead Outreach Associate. As a victim of community violence himself, our Lead Outreach Associate knows firsthand the struggle many victims face after a violent injury, and represents in every way the *credible messenger* who we need to do this work.

This all being said, our violence intervention program and the emerging programs at other hospital systems throughout the State remain substantially underpowered to support the needs of countless victims. Violence intervention programs across the state are in need of consistent funding to support the community-based, collaborative outreach that is the core of programmatic success, in short, the work of violence prevention professionals. Violence intervention programs depend on the ability of both hospital and community organizations to train and sustain *credible messengers* who can effectively reach victims and coordinate case management services.

We appreciate your support, and continued commitment to address gun violence in our state. We strongly encourage you to keep the momentum going, as you consider SB 477 and HB 5397.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

Submitted by Jackie Blake, 203-688-2503